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US Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine

18 February 2005

Health Information Operations Weekly Update



The HIO Update provides information regarding global medical and veterinary issues of interest to the United States Army. The update does not attempt to analyze the information as to its strategic or tactical impact on the US Army and should not be regarded as a medical intelligence product. Medical intelligence products are available from the [Armed Forces Medical Intelligence Center](#). The information in the HIO Update should provide an increased awareness of current and emerging health-related issues.

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HOT TOPICS

Air Pollution Damages Babies in Womb

15 February – Reuters reported that babies' DNA can be damaged even before they are born if their mothers breathe polluted air. Researchers monitored the babies' exposure to [polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons](#), which are compounds produced by burning. Women were rated as having high, moderate or low exposure based on average pollution levels for the group. They tested the umbilical cord blood of the newborns, looking specifically at the chromosomes, which carry the DNA. Damage to chromosomes can cause cancer. "We observed 4.7 chromosome abnormalities per thousand white blood cells in newborns from mothers in the low exposure group, and 7.2 abnormalities per thousand white blood cells in newborns from the high exposure mothers," Dr. Frederica Perera said in a statement. This kind of damage to the chromosomes is the type that tends to linger, making people more susceptible to cancer. [View Article](#)

Change in Recipe for Flu Vaccine

12 February – The International Herald Tribune reported that next season's [influenza vaccine](#) will be changed to protect against a new strain of the virus that was first identified in

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Eight Annual Force
Health Protection
Conference
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[What is the Force Health Protection Conference?](#)

The theme for the 2005 Conference is "**Force Health Protection – Future Force Enabler.**" Our conference mission is to advance technology, to better sustain the soldier in garrison or during deployments that may involve Weapons of Mass Destruction, to provide information of benefit to first responders, and to bolster everyday response capabilities. Our primary focus is the soldier.

[Who hosts the FHP Conference?](#)

The Conference is hosted by the U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine, a subordinate command of the U.S. Army Medical Command.

[Who should attend the FHP Conference?](#)

Last year, over 1500 individuals attended the Force Health Protection Conference. We had over 90 exhibitors, more than 80 poster presentations, and over 400 technical presentations. We expect 2005 to be another exceptional year for the Force Health Protection Conference. Military, Veterans

California last month and is spreading widely. The new strain has been identified in more than 20 percent of influenza viruses isolated from patients in recent weeks and is expected to be the dominant one circulating in the Northern Hemisphere next season, said the World Health Organization official, Dr. Klaus Stöhr. The strain, A/California/7/2004 (H3N2), was first identified from a specimen taken from a patient who had influenza in September, said Dr. Carol Glaser, chief of the viral branch of the California Department of Health Services. The standard flu shot is composed of three different strains of influenza virus. The California strain will substitute for A/Fujian, Stöhr said. The two other strains will remain the same: A/New Caledonia/20/99 (H1N1), which has been included for the last six years, and B/Shanghai/361/2002, which has been included for two years. The health organization panel will meet in September to recommend the strains for the vaccine for the Southern Hemisphere. [View Article](#)

Gene Therapy Restores Hearing in Deaf Animals

14 February – Reuters reported that by transferring a gene that regulates fundamental cell development into the inner ear of deafened guinea pigs, researchers have regenerated hair cells and partially restored the animals' hearing. Hair cells inside the cochlear of the ear respond to sound waves and convert them into electrical nerve signals that the brain interprets as sound. Damaged or absent hair cells are one cause of profound [deafness](#). Dr. Yehoash Raphael, at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, and his team used a modified virus to deliver the Atoh1 gene into the left inner ear of the deafened animals. Eight weeks later, they saw new hair cells developing in the treated ears. The hair cells looked nearly normal in the innermost part of the ear, although those in the outer structure remained immature. Brain stem recordings demonstrated improved hearing thresholds at all frequencies, with responses similar to those of normal animals. "The inner hair cell is the real hearing cell," Raphael pointed out to Reuters Health. However, outer hair cells are required for distinguishing different sounds, so it is likely the animals' hearing was distorted. " [View Article](#)

Genetic Testing Needed to Follow TB Outbreaks

10 February - Reuters Health reported that simply tracing one exposed person to the next is not an accurate way to follow the spread of [tuberculosis](#). Instead, formal genetic testing, or "genotyping," is needed. Researchers found that standard survey and culture techniques gave an incomplete picture of how the outbreak evolved. The authors emphasize that "traditional contact tracing needs confirmation by genotyping before transmission patterns of M. tuberculosis can be conducted...especially between patients with several risk

Administration professionals, DoD civilian professionals, and security professionals, and educators working in the areas of environmental health, occupational and preventive medicine, health promotion and wellness, population health, and behavioral health should plan to attend this event.

factors for infection." [View Article](#)

Grant Will Help Research Flu Bug

15 February – BBC News reported that researchers at the University of Bath have won a grant to help produce a drug that could stop [flu](#) and several other diseases from replicating in humans. The drug would work by being chemically very similar to part of the protective coating around cells in the throat that the flu virus first attacks. The flu bug would be "tricked" into attacking the drug instead of cells. The project will examine the behavior of atoms of the influenza virus which attack cells, and atoms of the throat cells that are attacked. By using advanced software to model the way these atoms interact, the atomic structure of a suitable drug could be worked out. [View Article](#)

Heredity Plays a Role in Heart Artery Blockages

15 February – Health Day reported that some people inherit a tendency for fatty deposits to form in dangerous regions of their heart arteries. Looking at angiograms -- images of heart arteries -- in 882 members of 401 families in whom [heart disease](#) was common, researchers found those deposits, called plaques, were most common at the points where a blockage shuts off blood flow to large regions of heart muscle. Those points are the places where smaller blood vessels branch off from the main coronary artery, and the upper parts of the left and right coronary arteries. The new findings, if confirmed, could affect heart disease screening strategies for close relatives of coronary heart patients, the researchers said. [View Article](#)

Mosquito Eating Shrimp Control Dengue Fever

11 February –Health Talk reported that [dengue fever](#) is responsible for more than 50 million infections and 12,000 deaths every year. The mosquito that transmits the infection to humans is the *Aedes aegypti* and it requires stagnant water to breed. Researchers took advantage of a microscopic water predator called Mesocyclops, a crustacean that feeds on mosquito larvae. After inoculating large water storages in Vietnam with Mesocyclops, the crustaceans devoured the larvae before they hatched. The team evaluated a pilot program that included inoculating 12 provinces in Vietnam from 1998 to 2003 with the crustacean. The researchers report that the mosquito has been eradicated in most villages in Vietnam and no cases of dengue fever have been reported in any of the villages since 2002. [View Article](#)

New Highly Active Agents against Sand Fly Fever

14 February – EurekAlert reported that [leishmaniases](#) and [trypanosomiases](#) are parasitic diseases which kill several thousands of people per year, mainly in developing countries. The effectiveness of existing treatments is being called into question owing to their toxicity and the emergence of resistance. A family of alkaloids, the quinolines, could be a worthwhile new therapeutic line to follow. Some of the many quinolines synthesized in the laboratory have anti-parasitic properties, especially against leishmaniases, others have antiretroviral activity. Biological trials in the mouse have already confirmed their properties and therapeutic efficacy. Experiments conducted on mice infected by visceral leishmaniasis showed that oral administration of these quinolines was effective for treating this severe form of the disease. [View Article](#)

Pentagon Partners With Militaries in Africa to Fight HIV/Aids

14 February – All Africa reported that the United States armed forces are partnering with more than 40 militaries around the world, including 29 in Africa, to stop the spread of [AIDS](#) among troops and their dependents. Since 2001, the Department of Defense HIV/AIDS Prevention Program (DHAPP) has spent more than \$75 million on AIDS research, prevention and treatment programs in more than 40 nations, including Nigeria, Cameroon, Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. According to the International Crisis Group's Kathy Ward, such partnerships are critical because "senior commanders in several African countries have admitted that the disease prevents well-trained units from being immediately available for mobilization" for much needed peacekeeping duties on the continent. She added that infection rates among some foreign militaries are as much as two to five times higher than among the civilian population. [View Article](#)

Potatoes Deliver Hepatitis Vaccine in Human Trials

15 February – Scientific American reported that [hepatitis B](#) (HBV) infects millions of people annually and nearly 1 million die each year worldwide, despite the existence of safe and effective injectable vaccines. Vaccines that can be administered orally stand a better chance of being successful in poorer countries that have high death rates from treatable maladies. To that end, researchers grew potato plants engineered to carry a gene that encodes the hepatitis B surface antigen. Once they had a plant that expressed high levels of the protein, the researchers cloned it and grew a number of the plants in a greenhouse. Forty-two volunteers then participated in a placebo-controlled, double-blind study in which they ate bite-sized pieces of the transgenic spuds or regular ones on three different occasions. After feasting on the tubers, the

subjects underwent blood tests to assess their levels of HBV antibodies. Sixty percent of the subjects that ate the transgenic potatoes showed marked increases in their immune responses to HBV. [View Article](#)

Stimuli and Desire Linked To Help Stroke Patients

14 February – EurekAlert reported that once-paralyzed stroke victims are regaining arm and hand functions thanks to an innovative treatment. The treatment uses a neuroprosthesis that stimulates muscles with electrical pulses, mimicking the intricate movements along the hand and arm. Simultaneously, the patient concentrates on the movement itself, gradually reconnecting the damaged neuronal connection with the patient's free will. In the study, the control group received standard physiotherapy and occupational therapy, while the treatment group trained with the neuroprosthesis in addition to the standard therapy. "In the treatment group, we showed that after 16 weeks, we can restore some of their reaching and grasping functions," said the lead researcher. "This progress did not appear in the control group." [View Article](#)

Test Could Aid Diagnosis of Mad Cow in People

15 February – HealthDay reported that a highly sensitive new test performed after death could help scientists more accurately determine if the person died from the human form of [mad cow disease](#). The test, called conformation-dependent immunoassay (CDI), was originally devised to detect disease-causing proteins called prions in cows, sheep and other animals. Prions are also responsible for the human form of mad cow, known as variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease. Researchers found that the test was faster and far more precise than previous diagnostics. The researchers are now studying the possibility of using CDI in living tissue to detect prion-based diseases while people or animals are still alive. [View Article](#)

Focus on Epidemiology

Japanese Encephalitis in Traveler Returning from Thailand, 2004

11 February – MMWR reported that [Japanese encephalitis](#) (JE) virus is a mosquito-borne flavivirus that is closely related to the West Nile and St. Louis encephalitis viruses endemic to North America. JE virus is a leading cause of viral encephalitis in Asia but is rarely reported among travelers to countries where JE is endemic. This report describes a case of an unvaccinated Washington resident who had JE after traveling to northern Thailand. The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommends JE vaccine for travelers to JE-endemic areas of Asia during the transmission season, especially those spending >1 month in those areas and whose travel itineraries include rural settings. JE vaccine should also be considered for travelers visiting areas with epidemic transmission or those engaging in extensive outdoor activity in rural settings in areas where JE is endemic, regardless of the duration of their visit. In addition, health-care providers and organized international travel programs should ensure that travelers obtain appropriate preventive health guidance before travel. [View Article](#)



DoD-GEIS: Outbreak Management Software (OMS)

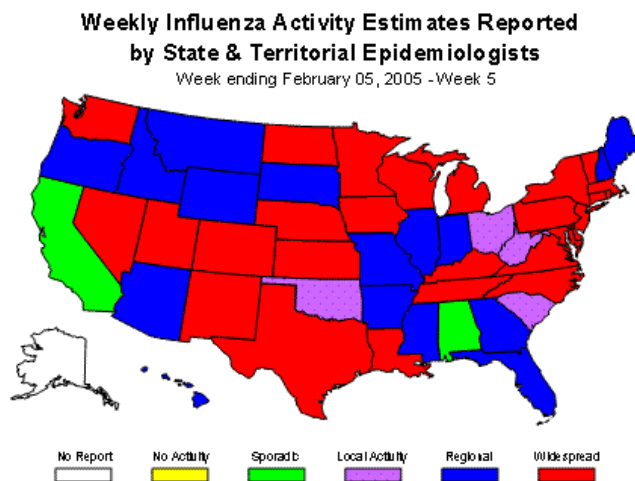
16 February - CDC is developing software to enhance public health preparedness through innovative use of information technology and management. At a recent meeting held in Atlanta on Jan 27-28 discussion focused on OMS, a new product of CDC's National Center for Public Health Informatics. Developed with DoD collaboration, the software was originally conceived for use by Smallpox Epidemiological Response Teams (SERT) in its early versions. The AF Institute for Operational Health, Brooks City Base, San Antonio, TX worked with CDC personnel since OMS' inception. In recent months CDC has conducted civilian OMS training and exercises with public health authorities in several states. At the January meeting, Services' representatives from CHPPM, Naval Environmental Health Center (NEHC), AFIOH, DoD-GEIS and DoD Health Affairs explored opportunities for collaborative use of OMS by the Armed Forces. Last week an exercise was held at AFIOH to test OMS; results from that test will be used to improve its OMS functionality for military public health and preventive medicine use. It is applicable to general outbreak management as a tool for an outbreak investigation team and can be loaded on laptop computers for field use. It offers the ability to collect data related to possible cases and exposures and to create traceable links of epidemiologic significance. By

tracing the mechanism of transmission and identifying the source of the outbreak, public health and preventive medicine staff can more efficiently contain the event. Ideally, systems supporting outbreak management should be integrated with early event detection, countermeasure administration, laboratory and surveillance systems to achieve the primary goal of managing the response to and containment of an outbreak. Information on outbreaks and surveillance, influenza (avian and human) including the DoD Global Influenza Program, Leishmaniasis and severe respiratory syndromes, including SARS, is available on the [DoD-GEIS website](#).

Influenza Update

[CDC Weekly Influenza Report for Week Ending 5 February – Week 5](#)

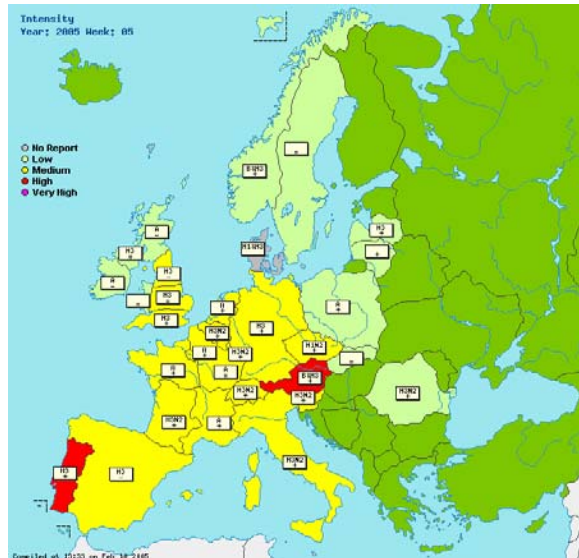
From 30 January – 5 February, influenza activity continued to increase in the United States. Seven hundred eighty-two (22.7%) specimens tested by U.S. World Health Organization (WHO) and National Respiratory and Enteric Virus Surveillance System (NREVSS) collaborating laboratories were positive for influenza viruses. There have been six influenza-associated pediatric deaths reported to CDC this season.



[European Influenza Surveillance Scheme Report for Week Ending 6 February – Week 5](#)

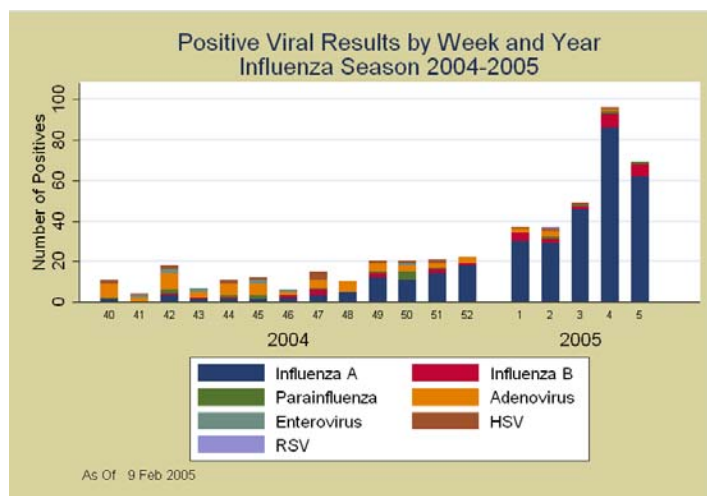
Clinical activity increased sharply again in Portugal in week 05/2005. The majority of countries participating in EISS reported an increase in clinical activity, particularly in Austria, the Netherlands, Slovenia and Switzerland, and to a lesser extent in Belgium, France and Italy. In contrast, clinical and

Spain. In general, children aged 0-4 were affected most. The second age group with the highest ILI incidence was schoolchildren (from 5 to 14 years of age). The dominant virus in Europe is A(H3) and seasonal data show most of these to be A/Wellington/1/2004 (H3N2)-like viruses.



DOD Worldwide Influenza Surveillance Program for Week Ending 5 February – Week 5

Since 3 October 2004, the Epidemiological Surveillance Division (AFIOH/SDE) has processed 1267 specimens as part of the influenza surveillance program. Of those specimens, 325 (26%) were positive for influenza A and 32 (2%) were positive for influenza B. In addition, 258 specimens are still being processed.



Other timely information can be found in:

The current issue of the Army Medical Surveillance Activity's [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

This week's Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

USCENTCOM

Cases of a Camel Plague: Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan

12 February – ProMED reported that cases of camel [plague](#) have been recorded in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, says Dr. Zahtab, Chief of the Central Veterinary Directorate in the Iranian province Gulistan. Gulistan shares a border with Turkmenistan, and has applied preventive measures against the introduction of camel plague. This includes patrols of veterinary teams along the province's frontiers and surveillance activities. So far, no symptoms of camel plague have been detected. Up to now, 5000 camels have been registered in the frontier areas of Gulistan. [View Article](#)

Meningococcal Disease in Sudan

14 February 2005 – The world Health Organization reported that as of 7 February, the Sudanese Federal Ministry of Health has reported a total of 250 cases and 19 deaths of [meningococcal disease](#) in Blue Nile (199 cases), Gadaref (22 cases) and Khartoum States (29). Three specimens have been laboratory-confirmed for *Neisseria meningitidis* serogroup A. The outbreak appears to be decreasing. The Sudanese Federal Ministry of Health has rapidly responded to the outbreaks and implemented mass vaccination campaigns in the villages affected in Blue Nile and Gadaref States. Reinforcement of surveillance is ongoing. [View Article](#)

UN Plays Down Fears of Polio Outbreak

11 February - The Globe and Mail reported that the UN health agency downplayed fears of a major [polio](#) outbreak in Saudi Arabia fuelled by Islamic pilgrims from African nations still in the grip of the disease. Saudi authorities have reported three cases of polio, including one this week in a boy from Nigeria, where a vaccine boycott by hard-line Muslim clerics in the country's north spawned a resurgence of the disease across Africa, infecting children in formerly polio-free nations. Saudi authorities regularly run vaccination programs ahead of the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, which draws faithful Muslims from around the world. A handful of polio cases should not raise

fears of a looming outbreak there, WHO officials said. [View Article](#)

USEUCOM

Bulgaria: Flu Epidemic Closes Down Sofia Schools

15 February – The Sofia News Agency reported that schoolchildren of 250 Sofia schools will remain at home till next Monday because of the [flu](#) epidemic announced in the capital city. Health officials decided to introduce this preventive measure to halt the fast spread of acute respiratory diseases that have seized about 30% of schoolchildren and 174 per 10,000 of the city residents. [View Article](#)

Gabon: New Factory Produces Drugs for the Region

15 February – All Africa reported that the government of Gabon has opened a factory in Libreville that will manufacture drugs to treat [HIV/AIDS](#), [malaria](#) and [tuberculosis](#) (TB) for 30 million people living in six states in Central Africa. "A battle has been won in the fight against the AIDS pandemic: the reduction of our country's dependence on foreign countries for the supply of drugs," Health Minister Paulette Missambo said. The factory will produce six types of generic antiretroviral (ARV) drugs for people living with AIDS. The plant will distribute medical supplies to all six member states of the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa: Gabon, Cameroon, Congo-Brazzaville, Equatorial Guinea, the Central African Republic and Chad. [View Article](#)

Nigeria: 15 Dead, Five Hospitalized as Cholera Hits

17 February – Yahoo! News reported that 15 people have died and five were hospitalized following an outbreak of [cholera](#) in two communities in the southeastern Nigerian state of Anambra. The disease broke out two weeks ago in Ossamalla and Odekpe communities in the Ogbaru local government area of the state, but was only reported this week, a spokeswoman said. She blamed the drinking of stagnant water for the epidemic, adding that the Red Cross has distributed vaccines to villagers and was educating them on the need to maintain good sanitation and healthy environment. [View Article](#)

Russia: Epizootic Outbreak of Rabies in Sverdlovsk

15 February – ProMED reported that an epizootic outbreak of [rabies](#) has been registered in the Sverdlovsk region. During 2004, an unfavorable disease situation was observed in the rayons (regions) of Krasnoufimsk, Artinsk, Siserts, Nevyansk,

Irbitsk, Kamishlovsk and Kamensk. Following the spread of rabies among wild animals, dogs and domestic farm animals have been exposed; consequently, 56 humans were exposed in 2004. The situation has deteriorated even further since the beginning of 2005 in the Sverdlovsk region. During January 2005, 25 rabies cases were recorded in wildlife, 3 in stray dogs and 2 in farm animals. Twelve people were bitten; the total number of exposed people was 30. [View Article](#)

Study Links Ebola Outbreaks to Animal Carcasses

14 February – EurekAlert reported that all recent [Ebola](#) virus outbreaks in humans in forests between Gabon and the Republic of Congo were the result of handling infected wild animal carcasses. The study found that many animal carcasses tested for Ebola between 2001 and 2003 produced positive results, and found direct links between the deadly disease in animal populations and humans. "This research proves that hunting and consumption of great apes represent a serious health risk for people in Central Africa, and a risk that can be avoided," said Dr. William Karesh, field veterinarian for the Wildlife Conservation Society and a co-author on the paper. "What we need now is improved awareness of this risk in communities where bushmeat is still a source of sustenance and continued monitoring of wildlife in the region." [View Article](#)

USNORTHCOM

AIDS Case Puts Health Officials on Alert

17 February – The Washington Post reported that health officials are closely watching the case of a New York man infected with a highly drug-resistant strain of the AIDS virus. The New York man reportedly had unprotected sex with hundreds of partners last fall while high on crystal methamphetamine. New York City health officials announced last week that a man in his mid-forties was infected with a strain of the human immunodeficiency virus that was resistant to most of the drugs used to treat HIV infection. Although such resistance is not unheard of, especially in urban populations, the case stood out because the man developed AIDS far more quickly than normal. His case raised the possibility that a fast-moving and hard-to-treat strain of virus had emerged. [View Article](#) (registration required)

Canada: Eleven Die of Flu in Nursing Home

10 February – The Toronto Star reported that another four

the total to 11 in the last two weeks. That matches the 11 deaths attributed to Influenza A across Ontario since the flu season began, including the three for the City of Toronto. No new cases of flu have been reported since 31 January. The average age of residents in the home is 87 and the residents who died of the flu were in their 80s and 90s. There are currently 81 Influenza A outbreaks in long-term care facilities and hospitals across the province. From Sept. 1, 2004 to Feb. 4, 2005 public health units from across the province reported 652 confirmed cases of flu — much lower than last year when there were 4,631 confirmed cases of Influenza A, with 109 deaths. [View Article](#)

Canada Suspects Tainted Feed in Third BSE Case

14 February - CIDRAP News reported that the investigation of Canada's third case of [bovine spongiform encephalopathy](#) (BSE), or mad cow disease, suggests that the cow ate feed contaminated with banned materials, according to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA). The cow was born in March 1998, a few months after Canada banned the use of cattle protein in feed for cattle and other ruminant animals in 1997. "This investigation identified that certain feed materials, likely manufactured a short time after the implementation of Canada's feed ban, may have been contaminated," the agency said. The investigation revealed no more cases of BSE in cattle linked with the infected cow. [View Article](#)

Debate over Drug Given to GIs

13 February – CBS News reported that some current or former troops sent to Iraq claim that Lariam, the commercial name for the anti-malarial drug [mefloquine](#), provoked disturbing and dangerous behavior. The families of some troops blame the drug for the suicides of their loved ones. Though the evidence is largely anecdotal, their stories have raised alarm in Congress, and the Pentagon has stopped giving out a pill it probably never needed to give to tens of thousands of troops in Iraq in the first place. The U.S. military, which developed the drug after the Vietnam War, maintains that Lariam is safe and effective, though officials have expressed some concern and the military tells its pilots not to take Lariam. In written guidance on the drug last year, the military urged commanders to send for a medical evaluation anyone who showed behavioral changes after taking the drug, "especially ... if they carry a weapon" — a description of nearly all U.S. troops in Iraq. [View Article](#)

Despite Budget Restraints, U.S. Moves to Animal IDs

13 February - The Wichita Eagle reported that despite budget limitations, concerns about data confidentiality and the sheer

size and complexity of the undertaking, the United States is slowly moving toward implementing a national [animal identification](#) system. Such a system will give animal health officials the means to trace the movement of any animal determined to be suffering from any "A-List" communicable disease -- including foot and mouth disease and mad cow disease -- within 48 hours of the discovery of disease. The U.S. Department of Agriculture made an identification system a national priority in December 2003 after a single case of bovine spongiform encephalopathy, commonly called mad cow disease, was discovered. Animal identification compliance currently is voluntary. But USDA plans call for implementation of a mandatory national system, possibly as early as 2007. The identification program will apply to all domestic animals, including horses, alpacas, llamas, swine, goats and sheep. But it is cattle, which move several times over the course of their lives, that have created the most concern. [View Article](#)

FDA to Create Drug Safety Board

15 February – CNN reported that the Food and Drug Administration will establish a new independent [Drug Safety Oversight Board](#) to monitor FDA-approved medicines once they're on the market and update physicians and patients with emerging information on risks and benefits. The agency has been criticized sharply in recent months as reacting too slowly to reports linking the arthritis drug Vioxx and pain drug Celebrex to increased risks of heart attack and stroke. The board will recommend what information and updates to put on the government's Drug Watch, resolve disputes over drug safety issues and oversee the development of a drug safety policy. It will be composed of FDA employees, medical experts from other HHS agencies and governmental departments, and consult with outside medical experts as well as consumer and patient groups, officials said. [View Article](#)

Flu Shots Don't Save Lives in Elderly, Study Suggests

14 February – AZ Central reported that a new study based on more than three decades of U.S. data suggests that giving [flu shots](#) to the elderly has not saved any lives. Led by National Institutes of Health researchers, the study challenges standard government dogma. The study's lead author, Lone Simonsen, a senior epidemiologist at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases said the study should influence the nation's flu prevention strategy, perhaps by expanding vaccination to schoolchildren, the biggest spreaders of the virus. However, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention plans no change in its advice on who should get flu shots, saying the NIH research isn't enough to shift gears. CDC epidemiologist William Thompson said it doesn't directly compare vaccinated vs. unvaccinated elderly. Previous studies that made that

comparison found the vaccine decreased the rate of all winter deaths. [View Article](#)

Hydraulic Fluid, Ground Meat – United States

16 February – ProMED reported that Emmepak Foods, Inc. of Milwaukee, WI, is voluntarily recalling approximately 123,000 pounds of ground beef that may be contaminated with hydraulic fluid, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service announced. These products were distributed to retail stores in Florida, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and South Carolina. [View Article and Specific Products Recalled](#)

Influenza Vaccine was used for Priority Groups

10 February - The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced that [influenza vaccine](#) was used during the first part of the 2004-2005 flu season to vaccinate those at highest risk of serious complications from influenza. Data indicated that 57.3 percent of children aged 6 to 23 months were vaccinated during September through December 2004. A 2002 survey indicated only 7.7 percent in the same age group were vaccinated for influenza. To date, nearly 59 percent of persons aged 65 years and older reported influenza vaccination through December 2004 compared to 65.5 percent of persons in this age group who reported influenza vaccination in 2003. Approximately 3.5 million doses of influenza vaccine are still available for use through the end of the influenza season. Because February is often the most severe month of the influenza season it's not too late to benefit from vaccination this season. [View Press Release](#)

New Disease Surveillance System Tested

14 February – The Washington Times reported that electronic healthcare data, such as U.S. emergency room visits or calls to a nurse, are being automated to detect the outbreak of some diseases. Martin Kulldorff of the Harvard School of Medicine has developed and operated real-time disease surveillance systems based on electronic records. The method, called the "space time permutation scan statistic," can detect disease outbreaks when only the number of cases is available. The program, tested in New York City, found four highly unusual clusters of diarrhea cases, three of which heralded citywide gastrointestinal outbreaks due to rotavirus and norovirus. That, researchers said, suggests the method can detect outbreaks early, but isn't prone to false alarms. The method has been integrated by the New York City Emergency Department. To make the method more widely accessible, it has been implemented as a feature of the freely available [SaTScan](#)

software. [View Article](#)

USPACOM

200 Indonesian Tsunami Survivors Hit By Suspected Food Poisoning

11 February – ProMED reported that 200 people in a camp for tsunami homeless in Indonesia's Aceh province have been hospitalized for what was believed to be [food poisoning](#) from eating tainted noodles. The incident late is believed to be the first outbreak of its kind in the dozens of makeshift camps holding many of the 400,000 people whose homes were destroyed in the 26 Dec 2004 disaster. Abu Bakar, the chief of Panah Pasir, an area in northern Aceh, said the sick were taken to hospital in the coastal city of Lhokseumawe because they began vomiting and foaming at the mouth shortly after consuming the noodles. [View Article](#)

Avian Flu Caused Encephalitis in Vietnamese Boy

16 February - CIDRAP News reported that researchers studying acute encephalitis cases in Vietnam discovered an unexpected cause of death in a 4-year-old boy, and possibly his 9-year-old sister: [avian influenza](#). The two cases differ from most other known human cases of H5N1 avian flu, which typically have been marked by fever, respiratory symptoms, and pneumonia. The findings should prompt healthcare providers to broaden their ideas about the clinical spectrum of H5N1 infection in humans. Both children died in hospitals in southern Vietnam in February 2004. No autopsy was performed on either child, but samples from the boy were taken for an ongoing study of the causes of acute encephalitis. When researchers examined those samples at different times over the succeeding months, they found the H5N1 virus in the boy's throat, rectal swabs, serum, and cerebrospinal fluid. The girl's history makes it likely that she died of the same illness as her brother. "The source of transmission may have been domestic ducks present in the canal near the children's house," the article says. "Direct transmission from sister to brother appears unlikely considering the interval between their illnesses. [View Article](#)

Bangladesh: Nipah Virus Kills 12

13 February – New Kerala reported that the incurable and potentially fatal [Nipah virus](#) transmitted by fruit bats has killed 12 people and infected 32 in Bangladesh in the fourth such outbreak. The latest outbreak struck Tangail district, north of Dhaka, 10 January, when 13 people developed fever and

fainted after drinking the local palm fruit's juice. The Dhaka-based Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research suspect that the outbreak was caused by contact with fruit contaminated by bat droppings or fruit the bats had bitten into. Proof of human-to-human transmission was initially discovered during the last outbreak, said the health and science bulletin of the Dhaka-based Centre for Health and Population Research.

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Bird Flu Outbreak in Northern Thailand

14 February – China Daily reported that a patient suspected of having [bird flu](#) has been admitted to hospital in Thailand's central province of Phitsanulok. The six-year-old boy from Bangrakam district has had a record of close physical contact with chickens. He is currently under constant medical supervision. Government officials are worried about the bird flu outbreak in the province. Prompiram district has been the worst hit, where the H5N1 virus was detected in eight different spots. The authorities are preparing to destroy the poultry in the affected areas to help prevent the spread of the disease to nearby districts. [View Article](#)

Dengue Hemorrhagic Fever in Timor-Leste - Update 3

15 February – The World Health Organization reported 215 hospitalized cases of dengue infection and 20 deaths (case fatality ratio, 9.3%). Of the 215 cases, 166 had clinical features compatible with dengue hemorrhagic fever (DHF) and the remaining 49 cases were diagnosed as suspected dengue fever (DF). Districts reporting DF/DHF cases are Baucau, Dili, Liquica, Maliana and Manatuto with 80% of the cases reported from Dili. [View Article](#)

Indian Ocean Earthquake and Tsunamis

15 February – US Agency for International Development has published a good summary fact sheet of the Indian Ocean Tsunami efforts. [View Fact Sheet](#)

Legionnaires' Disease Outbreak Worsens

14 February - The Age reported that the [legionnaires' disease](#) outbreak on the New South Wales south coast has worsened with health authorities confirming a fifth case of the potentially deadly disease. A 61-year-old Wollongong man was receiving treatment in Wollongong Hospital and remains in a stable condition. The development follows four other cases in which men aged 35, 57, 75 and 84 contracted the lung disease between December 30, 2004 and January 25 this year. News of the fifth case comes less than a week after health authorities

Wollongong Central Business District that tested positive for the legionella bacteria. [View Article](#)

Vietnam Reports No New Bird Flu Case in Two Weeks

14 February – Canada.com reported that Vietnam has had no new human [bird flu](#) cases in the past two weeks, and outbreaks among poultry have dropped significantly, a possible indication that the virus is waning. Tuoi Tre (Youth) newspaper said bird flu has killed or forced the cull of some 1.5 million birds in 34 provinces in Vietnam since December, but that outbreaks among poultry have slowed down in recent weeks. Only two to four outbreaks have been reported since Feb. 8, when 17 were discovered. Meanwhile, seven of the 34 provinces affected have reported no new outbreaks in the last 21 days or more, the paper said. [View Article](#)

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Vaccination Week in the Americas Set to Start April 23

11 February – The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) reported that health workers in every country in the Western Hemisphere are preparing strategies, purchasing vaccines, and coordinating logistics for the largest immunization drive in the Americas, targeting millions of children for Vaccination Week in the Americas, starting 23 April. The week-long events will focus on the children normally left behind, those living in rural border regions, indigenous people and vulnerable groups, including women of childbearing age and the elderly. Last year the countries of South and Central America, Mexico and the Caribbean vaccinated 43.7 million people, mostly children. The initiative that began in the Andean region of South America two years ago with a joint immunization week grew to include 19 countries and 15 million persons received vaccinations. All the health ministers of the Americas then endorsed the initiative and agreed to join it. [View Article](#)